

What Does a Healthy Church Look Like?

By Reverend Anthony Scalfani

The **Local Church** is the focal point of **God's plan for displaying His glory to the nations**: Churches that **reflect the character of God** exhibit:

1. **Expositional Preaching**

This is preaching which faithfully expounds **what the Scriptures actually teach** in a particular passage(s), **carefully explaining its meaning in the context of the whole Bible** and applying it to the congregation. **It is a commitment to hearing God speak to His people through the Preaching of the Word and to recovering the centrality of God's Word in our corporate worship.**

2. **A Biblical Theology**

God, through Paul, charges Titus to, ". . . speak the things which are fitting for sound doctrine." (Titus 2:1). **Our concern should be** not only with how we are taught, but **with what we are taught**. A biblical theology comes from a commitment to **know the God of the Bible as He has revealed Himself in the Holy Scriptures.**

3. **Biblical Understanding of the Gospel**

The Gospel is the heart of Christianity. But The Gospel is not that God wants to meet people's felt needs or help them develop a healthier self-image. We have sinfully rebelled against our Creator and Judge. Yet **God has graciously sent His Son to die the death we deserved for our sin, and He has credited Christ's acquittal to those who biblically repent of their sins and biblically believe in Jesus' death and resurrection.** *That is The Gospel.*

4. **Biblical Understanding of Conversion**

The spiritual change **each person needs in order to be acceptable to God** requires **such a radical transformation of their essential nature**, so near the essential root of us, that **only God can do it.** **We need God to convert us.** Conversion need not be an emotionally heated experience, but **it must evidence itself in godly fruit if it is to be what the Bible regards as a true conversion.**

5. **Biblical Understanding of Evangelism/Missions**

How someone shares the gospel is closely related to how he understands the gospel. To present it as an additive that gives non-Christians something they naturally want (e.g. joy or peace) is to present a half-truth, which elicits false conversions. The whole truth is that **our deepest need is spiritual life**, and that **new life only comes by biblically repenting of our sins and biblically believing in Jesus.** We present the gospel openly, and leave the converting to God.

6. **Biblical Understanding of Membership**

Membership should reflect **a living commitment to a local church in attendance, giving, prayer and service;** otherwise it is meaningless, worthless, and even dangerous. The church should not allow people to keep their membership in the churches for sentimental reasons or lack of attention. **To be a member is knowingly to be traveling together as aliens and strangers in this world as we head to our heavenly home.**

7. **Biblical Church Discipline**

Church discipline gives parameters to church membership. The idea seems negative to people today – "didn't our Lord forbid judging?" But if we cannot say how a Christian should *not* live, how can we say how he or she *should* live? **Each local church actually has a biblical responsibility to judge the life and teaching of its leaders, and its members, particularly/individually, insofar as either could compromise the church's witness to the gospel.** The church expresses its love and concern for the spiritual well-being of its members by, if/when necessary disciplining them.

8. Promotion of Christian Discipleship and Growth

A pervasive concern with church growth exists today – not simply with growing numbers, but with growing members. **Though many Christians measure other things, the only certain observable sign of growth is a life of increasing holiness, rooted in Christian self-denial. These concepts are nearly extinct in the modern church.** Recovering true discipleship for today would build the church and promote a clearer witness to the world.

9. Biblical Understanding of Leadership

What eighteenth-century Baptists and Presbyterians often agreed upon was that **there should be a plurality of elders in each local church.** This plurality of elders is not only biblical, but practical — it has the immense benefit of rounding out the pastor's gifts to ensure the proper shepherding of God's church.

10. Prayer

God has given His Church prayer as a vital means of grace. The entire local church body should regularly and persistently be in prayer, both corporately and individually.

11. Fellowship

Each and **every Christian should earnestly desire the common fellowship which they share exclusively with God and the family of God.** God has given it for their exhortation, edification, building up and consolation.

12. Worship

The healthy church recognizes the **God given purpose/reason for its existence.** For the perpetual Worship of God in spirit and in truth, to the glory of God.

13. Ministry

As God has particularly given diverse spiritual gifts to the various members of the body of Christ, so **for the proper functioning of the church, the common good of the members and the glory of Jesus Christ,** the Head of the Body, it is needful that **all members should joyously and selflessly exercise the stewardship of their gifts,** to bless Christ by blessing His Church.